

CLAIMS

1. A computer-implemented method of providing information regarding one or more items for sale to a user, the method comprising:

- (a) comparing a user's stored profile data to data regarding a plurality of items;
- 5 (b) identifying one or more items of interest to the user from the plurality of items according to the user's stored profile data;
- (c) organizing the identified one or more items of interest according to the user's stored profile data;
- 10 (d) formatting a document representing the identified one or more items of interest as organized in step (c); and
- (e) providing the formatted document to the user.

2. The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein step (d) comprises:

15 providing one or more hyperlinks directing the user to additional information for a respective one of the one or more identified items of interest.

3. The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein step (e) comprises sending the formatted document to the user through a computer network.

20 4. The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein step (e) comprises sending the formatted document as an e-mail message.

25 5. The computer-implemented method of claim 4, further comprising: sending the e-mail message via a computer network.

6. The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein step (c) comprises:

30 ordering the identified one or more items of interest in an order from highest interest to lowest interest as a function of the user's stored profile data.

7. The computer-implemented method of claim 6, wherein step (d) comprises:

5 placing a predetermined number of the one or more items with the highest interest in a top portion of the formatted document.

8. The computer-implemented method of claim 7, wherein step (d) further comprises:

10 grouping the one or more items not in the predetermined number of items placed in the top portion of the formatted document by categories; and

15 ordering the categories from highest interest to lowest interest as a function of the user's stored profile data.

9. The computer-implemented method of claim 7, wherein step (d) comprises:

15 providing a hyperlink and image for each respective item of the predetermined number of items placed in the top portion of the formatted document.

20 10. The computer-implemented method of claim 9, wherein the formatted document is an HTML document.

11. The computer-implemented method of claim 10, wherein the predetermined number is not greater than three.

25 12. A method of providing information regarding one or more items for sale to a user, the method comprising:

under control of a client system:

- (a) displaying preference information to be selected by the user; and
- (b) upon completion of preference selection by the user, sending the

30 selected preference information to a first server system;

under control of the first server system:

- (c) receiving the selected preference information;

- (d) storing the selected preference information;
- (e) comparing the selected preference information to data representing one or more items available for purchase and determining one or more items of interest to the user; and
- 5 (f) sending information regarding the identified one or more items of interest to the client system.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the client system and the server system communicate with one another via a computer network.

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- 14. The method of claim 12, wherein step (f) comprises:
 - under control of the first server system:
 - (g) formatting a document to include information regarding the determined one or more items of interest and sending the formatted document to the client system.

15 15. The method of claim 14, wherein the formatted document comprises a hyperlink for each respective one or more items of interest.

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16. The method of claim 15, wherein each hyperlink is directed to a second server system different from the first server system.

25 17. The method of claim 16, wherein each hyperlink is directed to information on the first server system.

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- 18. The method of claim 12, further comprising:
 - under control of the first server system:
 - (g) ordering the determined one or more items of interest in an order from highest interest to lowest interest as a function of the user's stored selected preference information.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein step (f) comprises:

under control of the first server system:

(h) formatting a document to include information regarding the determined one or more items of interest in the order established in step (g) and sending the formatted document to the client system.

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20. The method of claim 19, wherein step (h) comprises:

(i) inserting a hyperlink for each respective one or more items of interest in the formatted document,

wherein each hyperlink points to additional information about the

10 respective one or more items of interest.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein step (h) further comprises:

(j) placing the hyperlink for a predetermined number of the one or more items of interest in a top portion of the formatted document.

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22. The method of claim 21, wherein step (j) comprises:

(k) providing a graphic image in the respective hyperlink of the predetermined number of one or more items of interest placed in the top portion of the formatted document.

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23. A server system for providing information to a user regarding one or more items for sale, the server system comprising:

a first data storage device storing item information on each item of a plurality of items for sale;

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a receiving component for receiving user purchase preference data from a client system;

a second data storage device for storing the received user purchase preference data;

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a list generating component for comparing, for each respective user, the respective user purchase preference data to the stored item information to generate a list of one or more items for sale that may be of interest to the respective user; and

a transmission component for transmitting the generated list to the respective user on the client system.

24. The server system as recited in claim 23, further comprising:

5 a formatting component to order the list of one or more items and to format the ordered list in a document.

25. The server system as recited in claim 24, wherein the transmission component transmits the document as an e-mail sent via a computer network.

10 26. The server system as recited in claim 25, wherein the document is an HTML document.

15 27. The server system as recited in claim 24, wherein the formatting component comprises:

a linking component for adding a hyperlink to the document for each respective item in the list.

28. A computer program product comprising:

20 a computer-readable medium;
computer program instructions, wherein the computer program instructions, when executed by a computer, direct the computer to perform a method of providing information to a user regarding one or more items for sale, the method comprising:

25 (a) comparing a user's stored profile data to data regarding a plurality of items;

(b) identifying one or more items of interest to the user from the plurality of items according to the user's stored profile data;

(c) organizing the identified one or more items of interest according to the user's stored profile data;

30 (d) formatting a document representing the identified one or more items of interest as organized in step (c); and

(e) providing the formatted document to the user.

29. The computer program product of claim 28, wherein step (e) of the
method comprises sending the formatted document to the user through a computer
5 network.

30. The computer program product of claim 28, wherein step (d) of the
method comprises:

10 providing one or more hyperlinks directing the user to additional
information for a respective one of the one or more identified items of interest.

31. The computer program product of claim 28, wherein step (c) of the
method comprises:

15 ordering the identified one or more items of interest in an order from
highest interest to lowest interest as a function of the user's stored profile data.

32. The computer program product of claim 31, wherein step (d) of the
method comprises:

20 placing a predetermined number of the one or more items with the highest
interest in a top portion of the formatted document.

33. The computer program product of claim 32, wherein step (d) of the
method comprises:

25 providing a hyperlink and image for each respective item of the
predetermined number of items placed in the top portion of the formatted
document.

34. A computer-implemented method of preparing and sending an electronic
newsletter message prepared for each individual of a plurality of individuals, the method
30 comprising:

retrieving a profile associated with a first individual;

identifying a newsletter template in the retrieved profile, said newsletter template having one or more variable fields each to be provided with data as a function of information in the retrieved profile;

identifying an e-mail address in the retrieved profile;

5 establishing a connection with a mail server associated with the identified e-mail address;

sending the newsletter template to the mail server, and, if, as the newsletter template is being sent to the mail server, a variable field is encountered, providing data for the variable field as a function of information in the retrieved profile and sending the provided data in the place of the variable 10 field; and

continuing to send the newsletter template,

wherein the newsletter template with its one or more variable fields each completed with provided data is sent to the identified e-mail address; and

15 wherein no version of the newsletter template with one or more variable fields completed is stored other than on the mail server.

35. The computer-implemented method of claim 34, wherein the newsletter template is an HTML document.

20 36. The computer-implemented method of claim 34, wherein the newsletter template is a text document.

25 37. The computer-implemented method of claim 34, wherein at least one of the variable fields in the newsletter template is provided with data that is a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) link.

38. A system for preparing and sending an electronic newsletter message prepared for each individual of a plurality of individuals, the system comprising:

30 means for retrieving a profile associated with a first individual;

means for identifying a newsletter template in the retrieved profile, said newsletter template having one or more variable fields each to be provided with data as a function of information in the retrieved profile;

means for identifying an e-mail address in the retrieved profile;

5 means for establishing a connection with a mail server associated with the identified e-mail address;

10 means for sending the newsletter template to the mail server, and, if, as the newsletter template is being sent to the mail server, a variable field is encountered, providing data for the variable field as a function of information in the retrieved profile and sending the provided data in the place of the variable field; and

means for continuing to send the newsletter template,

wherein the newsletter template with its one or more variable fields each completed with provided data is sent to the identified e-mail address; and

15 wherein no version of the newsletter template with one or more variable fields completed is stored on the system other than on the mail server.

39. The system of claim 38, wherein the newsletter template is an HTML document.

20 40. The system of claim 38, wherein the newsletter template is a text document.

25 41. The system of claim 38, wherein at least one of the variable fields in the newsletter template is provided with data that is a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) link.

30 42. A computer program product comprising:
a computer-readable medium;
computer program instructions on the computer-readable medium, wherein the computer program instructions, when executed by a computer, direct the computer to

perform a method of preparing and sending an electronic newsletter message prepared for each individual of a plurality of individuals, the method comprising:

retrieving a profile associated with a first individual;

5 identifying a newsletter template in the retrieved profile, said newsletter template having one or more variable fields each to be provided with data as a function of information in the retrieved profile;

identifying an e-mail address in the retrieved profile;

10 establishing a connection with a mail server associated with the identified e-mail address;

sending the newsletter template to the mail server, and, if, as the newsletter template is being sent to the mail server, a variable field is encountered, providing data for the variable field as a function of information in the retrieved profile and sending the provided data in the place of the variable field; and

15 continuing to send the newsletter template,

wherein the newsletter template with its one or more variable fields each completed with provided data is sent to the identified e-mail address; and

20 wherein no version of the newsletter template with one or more variable fields completed is stored other than on the mail server.

25 43. The computer program product of claim 42, wherein the newsletter template is an HTML document.

44. The computer program product of claim 42, wherein the newsletter

25 template is a text document.

45. The computer program product of claim 42, wherein at least one of the variable fields in the newsletter template is provided with data that is a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) link.